A·NEW·YEAR'S MASQVE·AND OTHER·POEMS

EDITH·M·THOMAS

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Office
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

A NEW YEAR'S MASQUE, AND OTHER POEMS

BY

EDITH M. THOMAS

BOSTON
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1885

Copyright, 1884,
By EDITH M. THOMAS.

All rights reserved.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge:
Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A New Year's Masque	1
Sage or Poet	9
Had I Wist	11
Exiles	13
Exorcism	14
Vesta	15
Doom	17
Voices of the Way	18
$	20
Noblesse Oblige	21
A Friend at Court	22
Fire-Worship	23
Dew of Parnassus	25
The Reply of the Nineteenth Century to the Passionate Shepherd	27
Omens	29
The Weather-Vane	30
Youth in Age	32
Flown Birds	34
St. Cecilia	35
Life and Death	37
Inaugural	39
Cuthbert	41

THE FIRESIDE IN THE SNOW 43
THE CHRYSANTHEMUM 45
THEANO 47
A SONG OF REST 48
FLOTSAM AND JETSAM 50
MENDING THE ROSE 52
THE NIGHT WIND 53
POPPIES IN OUR WHEAT 54
APRIL CAPRICES 55
A RAINBOW 57
A BEE IN MY BONNET 58
DIABLERIE 59
SING-IN-THE-WINTER 61
GAFFER TIME 63
A LIGHT ROUND 64
SPEEDWELL 66
LAUREL 67
MUSAGETES 68
SYRINX 69
SOUTH AND WEST 71
A PARALLEL 73
SUB ROSA 74
AT THE SPRING 76
THE ELFIN KNIGHT 78
ACROSS THE WORLD I SPEAK TO THEE 80
THE BIRCH TREE 81
THE MOURNING DOVE 82
DEAD LOVE 83
OUT OF THE SEA 85
THE STIRRUP-CUP 86
PATMOS 88
OAK-CORN 90
MOSS 92

Nature 94
Life hath put Death Away 96
The Grasshopper 97
A Charge to the Bees 99
Wild Honey 100
The Refuge 102
Vertumnus 104
Flower and Fruit 106
Demeter's Search 107
Persephone 111
Lityerses and the Reapers 113
Something Passes 116

SONNETS.

Delay 118
Ephemera 119
The Fountains of the Rain 120
Frost 121
Equinox 122
Pyrrhus' Ring 123
Homesick 124
Master Spirits 125
Solitude 126
Occasion 127
The Haunted House 128
Rotation 129
Revenge 130
Poverty 131
The Oread 132
On the Sonnet 133
To Sleep 134
On Severn's Last Sketch of Keats 135
Dawn 136
To Fame 137

A NEW YEAR'S MASQUE,

AND OTHER POEMS.

A NEW YEAR'S MASQUE.

A closed portal. JANUS *heard chanting.*

I KEEP the gate through which the Morning comes,
By lightsome Hours attended on her rounds;
These, ever as they pass, a gate-fee pay
In silver coinage of sweet melody,
In roses strewn, in fragrant balms and spice.
'T is mine to guard the portal of the year,
To close or open to the seasons four
And to the importuning throng of days.
Sometimes I hear the tread of stormy feet,
Hoarse trumpet blasts, and loud, assaulting blows,
And threats to pull my ancient fortress down;
But other times they come with flatteries smooth,
Entreating, "Janus, Janus, let us in!"
I watchful stand; I will not turn the key
Until my glass and fingered dial stern
Declare the moment ripe. Two ways I look,
Two faces I present: one seamed with eld,

And gray with looking on the frozen past;
One fresh as morn, and fronting days to be.
But, softly! hither come the elfin folk,
Whom I did promise I would entertain
Upon this eve with pageant rare and strange.
'T is now the time my spells most potent work, —
Now, while the surging, deep-toned bells lament
The passèd year, ere, fickle, they shall change
Their solemn burden for a round of joy,
Chiming the praises of the year new-crowned.

THE BELLS.

Toll, toll,
Speed to its goal,
The sacred soul
Of the Year.

Mortals, attend,
Let prayers ascend
For this your friend
Without peer.

A VOICE IN AIR.

Light, light,
I take my flight
Up through the night,
Starry clear.

Mortal no more,
I onward soar,
While, just before,
Flies the Year.

The door is opened. Enter a troop of Elves. They salute JANUS, *and present gifts.*

Hear us, keeper of the door,
Janus, skilled in magic lore, —
Thou who dost, with iron key,
Or imprison or set free;
Thou to whom the journeying Year
Doth at every stage appear,
And to whom the seasons bow,
Bringing gifts, as we do now;
Thou that holdest in thy gaze
Both the gone and coming days,
Grant to us such vision clear;
Father of the Morning, hear!

JANUS.

I will, in part, content you, curious elves.
Then, stand ye here, so many on my right,
So many on my left: now, lift your eyes,
And send your glances through the portal wide.
Be keen and true; and, whatsoe'er ye see,
Report it to me in alternate songs.

They do as bidden. Visions of the Twelve Months pass before them. They sing alternately.

JANUARY.

I see whirling phantoms go
Through the fields of drifting snow;
Huddled flocks in wind-swept fold,
Cattle, sheltering from the cold,
Underneath a roof of hay,
Where the stack is grazed away.

JULY.

I can see the nibbling flocks,
Lately shorn of fleecy locks;
In the pool the cattle stand.
I see clover-purpled land;
Tasseled maize and yellow grain,
Gleam of sickle, harvest wain.

FEBRUARY.

I behold the meteor glance,
And the merry dancers dance
In the cold Aurora's light,
Flinging wide their streamers bright;
And they dance to whistled glees
Of the wind in winter trees.

APRIL.

I see skies of cloudless blue,
Sunlight glancing on the dew;
Tender blades, too quickly grown,
By the south wind gently blown;
Amber buds unfolding, now
Green mist clothes the woody bough.

OCTOBER.

I see clusters on the vine,
And I breathe an air like wine;
Golden pippins on the tree,
Toiling presses, next I see:
Let me, then, through strawy pipe,
Quaff the season warm and ripe!

MAY.

I behold the building bird,
Where the leaves are lightly stirred ;
Oriole's nest in elm-tree hung,
Thrushes leading out their young ;
Chimney-swifts, in circling flight,
Painted by the sunset light.

AUGUST.

I behold the firefly's lamp
Waving in the thicket damp ;
Evening-primrose sudden bloom
Mid the scented, sultry gloom ;
Flitting moths, with ruby eyes ;
Folded bees and butterflies.

NOVEMBER.

I see where the meadow-mouse
Has its grassy, low-domed house ;
Where its hoard the squirrel keeps,
Where the furry marmot sleeps ;
Where, upon a gnarlèd limb,
Sits the owl, in forest dim.

MARCH.

I see many a curving rill,
Many a river, blind and still ;
Motionless the waterfall,
Chained against the ledgy wall,
Like a captive maiden, there,
Bound by her long, flowing hair.

SEPTEMBER.

I can see the rain up-fill
Every summer-wasted rill;
Fresh'ning waters, as they run
Through the shade and in the sun,
Till, at length, they lie concealed
Under rush or willow shield.

JUNE.

I can see the climbing rose,
And the glances that it throws
Past the casement, as to say,
"Gloomy night has flown away;
How can Beauty keep her eye
Shut against this morning sky?"

DECEMBER.

I behold a ruddy tide
Drawing up the chimney wide,
And the window-pane embossed
By the night-work of the frost;
Scarce the moon, with prying beams,
Can look in where Beauty dreams.

ELVES IN CHORUS.

Father Janus, thou dost see
How so ill our songs agree;
We should bicker evermore,
Looking from this charmèd door.
Tell us, who have seen aright,
Who were false in speech or sight?

JANUS.

Ye all have rightly seen, and said aright;
No longer, then, among yourselves contend;
But tell me, if ye can, O quick-eyed elves,
Who is the royal stranger near at hand?
Be ready; greet him with a roundelay,
When ye have heard the dancing of the bells.

THE BELLS.

Ring, ring!
As to a king,
Homage bring;
Hail the Year!

Mortals, attend,
Your voices lend;
'T is a friend
Without peer.

A VOICE IN AIR.

Light, light,
I take my flight
Down through the night,
Starry clear.

Immortal I leave,
To mortal I cleave;
Me, Earth, receive
With the Year.

ONE OF THE ELVES.

Hail the Year! all hail the Year!
Music of the dreaming sphere
Greets thee, coming from the skies;
Dawn is kindled at thine eyes.
Oh, we haste to offer thee
Elfin service, leal and free!
Hail the Year!

JANUS.

Hail the Year! all hail the Year!
Rule by love, and not by fear;
Be thou clement, be thou just,
Break no mortal's tender trust:
So, when thou to heaven ascend,
Love and praise shall thee attend.
Hail the Year!

SAGE OR POET.

In yon woody hermitage
Dwell a poet and a sage:
Peaceful inmates — mark them well!
Room enough within their cell, —
Room enough for courteous foes.
In or out, each singly goes:
Never yet the twain were seen
Walking in the forest green;
Nor beneath the roof were met,
Though the time were cold and wet.

Go there as the poet's guest,
Share his feast and share his rest,
Drinking many a jocund bout;
Stay until the stars come out, —
Ay, until next morning's sun, —
You 'll not see that other one,
Him of keen and narrow eye,
Lip austere and discourse high.

Go there as the sage's guest,
He will serve you with his best;
Spend the white December days,
By his crackling sere-wood blaze,
Listening what the wind-harp sings,

When the North sweeps o'er its strings:
You may come, and come again,
Or in sunshine, snow, or rain,
But you may not ever meet,
At the door or ingle-seat,
Him whose thought goes lighter shod
Than the plumèd errand-god.

Read the legend as you run:
Sage and poet are but one;
He you seek is found within, —
Sage and poet know their kin.

HAD I WIST!

All night, in rustling rich array,
It frights the timid Sleep away;
It is not gone at break of day,
It has one word to sing or say, —
Ah, had I wist!
It plucks the morning mist
From off my hiding-place,
And looks me in the face
With well-remembered grace;
I know its name and race, —
Ah, had I wist!

It has a lodge beneath the eaves;
To all my pleasant walks it cleaves;
And, faster than the Summer weaves,
Undoes the boon of buds and leaves.
Ah, had I wist!
It calls me to a tryst
I cannot choose but keep;
It bids me not to weep,
It holdeth tears too cheap
To ease a cause so deep, —
Ah, had I wist!

Its eyes are sometimes like Hope's eyes,
And sometimes like Love's in disguise ;
Its lips are cunning to devise
All kinds of subtle strategies, —
Ah, had I wist!
It reads me through the list
Of canceled-out delight ;
Too late to set all right,
Or any loss requite,
It teaches craft and sleight, —
Ah, had I wist!

Its name between its brows is set ;
I read its name, Vain Sorrow, — yet
Another readeth there Regret,
Late Wisdom paying Folly's debt —
Ah, had I wist!
There is no votarist,
That wears the pavement stone
In prayer and vigil lone,
Such constancy hath shown,
Such faithfulness, I own, —
Ah, had I wist!

EXILES.

They both are exiles; he who sailed
  Great circles of the day and night,
Until the vapory bank unveiled
  A land of palm-trees fair to sight.

They both are exiles; she who still
  Seems to herself to watch, ashore,
The wind, too fain, his canvas fill,
  The sunset burning close before.

He has no sight of Saxon face,
  He hears a language harsh and strange;
She has not left her native place,
  Yet all has undergone a change.

They both are exiles; nor have they
  The same stars shining in their skies;
His nightfall is her dawn of day,
  His day springs westward from her eyes!

Each says apart, There is no land
  So far, so vastly desolate,
But, had we sought it hand in hand,
  We both had blessed the driving fate.

EXORCISM.

A Fear sat by my door both day and night;
I could not sleep, nor food or drink could taste;
From dusk to dawn I kept a well-trimmed light,
A double lock upon the door I placed.

What could I do? First, idle songs I sung,
And strove to keep my woful heart in cheer;
So trembled my unwilling voice and tongue,
To him who sat without 't was sport to hear.

Next, I unto my learned books did turn,
In hope some potent charm therefrom to read;
With vexèd soul, I bade their dry leaves burn,
That could not help me in my utmost need.

At last, I thought 't were best my foe to face
(Bold had I grown by counsel of despair).
I oped the door: the Fear, with mocking grace,
Bade me good-by, and vanished in the air.

VESTA.

I saw a city builded in the fire,
Entire;
Walled with live ember, that none violates
Its gates.
None egress may obtain, nor way therein
May win;
But watchmen, ready with the sword and lance,
Advance.
On every castled tower and parapet
Are set
Banners of goodly crimson, and of white,
Star-bright:
And in that city, fair with lambent heats,
Are streets, —
Streets paven, full of stirs, and toiling arts,
And marts,
Villas, and gardens where the fountains play
Rose spray,
And beds of amaranth wave to and fro,
Aglow.
And in that city's heart there is a shrine
Divine,
Of ebony built, with great doors open wide,
Each side,
And pillars wreathen with a cloudy gyre
Of fire.

There on the altar, in a chaliced urn,
Doth burn
A spirit from the ether spaces sown,
Unknown:
And maidens four the glowing germ preserve,
And serve,
Singing alway: — Queen Vesta, grave and dear,
Dwells here;
Pleasant the wreaths of frankincense and myrrh
To her.
She hath, beside, in the deep-caverned Earth,
Her hearth,
And luminous cells beneath the tided deeps
She keeps;
The rolling planet-fires are hers to feed,
And speed;
Hers, on the kindled plumes of birds, to fare
Through air;
Hers, in the pulse of all small grass and plants,
To dance;
In man's heart, too, deep in its purple wells,
She dwells!

DOOM.

The doom of Oleg by a priest foretold:
"O Prince, if brief or long thy years shall be,
Know this: thy noble war-steed, swift and bold,
Shall bring thy death to thee."

"Not so!" cried Oleg, wroth, with flashing eyes;
"My steed — best friend — a traitor's heart reveal!
I save his honor, for this hour he dies!"
And, saying, drove the steel.

But who the point of fate can turn or dull?
Years after, coming to his charger's grave,
A poison serpent, lodged within the skull,
The prince his death-wound gave.

VOICES OF THE WAY.

WHAT is the voice I hear,
Like the note of a trumpet clear, —
Follow the dreams of thy youth!
And what is that voice I hear,
Like the tone of an angel austere, —
Hollow the dreams of thy youth!
Ah, tell me which is the voice of truth!

Whoso journeys this way
In the prime and freshness of day,
When Fancy and Hope have sway,
Hears only the first voice say,
Follow the dreams of thy youth!
And this, to him, is the voice of truth.

Whoso, at noon of the day,
Blind with the dust of the fray,
Passeth this mortal way, —
He heareth the second voice say,
Hollow the dreams of thy youth!
And this, to him, is the voice of truth.

The same, at the close of the day,
When shadows lie cool on the way,

Hath visions of long-lost May: —
Boyhood and Age both say,
Follow the dreams of thy youth!
Ah, tell me if this be the voice of truth!

$.

When Heracles, the twelve great labors done,
To Calpe came, and there his journey stayed,
He raised two pillars toward the evening sun,
And carved them by a goddess' subtle aid.
Upon their shafts were sacred legends traced,
And round the twain a serpent cincture placed:
'T was at this bound the primal world stood still,
And of Atlantis dreamed, with baffled will.

When the young West arose from ocean hoar,
The rich, the many-delved, the many-sown,
She caught the symbol from the Old World shore,
And, past gainsaying, made it all her own!
In mint and mart, on every lading quay,
The pillars and the wreathing serpent see!
But ye, her prospered sons, do not forget,
Atlantis lies beyond the pillars yet!

NOBLESSE OBLIGE.

Noblesse oblige. What though ye gain
The sightly ground above the plain?
We wait to see your signal glow
Upon the mountain's ancient snow:
Now speed, since all return is vain.
If, looking downward, ye were fain
In the sweet valley to remain,
A voice would warn you from below, —
Noblesse oblige!

Ye burden-bearers, ne'er complain,
Though more and more ye must sustain.
On you their loads will many throw;
Make broad your shoulders; blessings go
With those who help the moiling train, —
Noblesse oblige!

A FRIEND AT COURT.

A FRIEND at court canst thou not find?
At Favor's gate the guard unkind
With frowns will drive thee thence unless
Thou comest clothed in courtier's dress,
And hast thy pass well countersigned.
Try not that way with peril lined,
Thy hest upon another bind:
How rich thou art, if thou possess
A friend at court!

Keep to thyself the quiet mind;
The doubtful maze for thee he 'll wind,
And all with craft and gentleness
Thy suit on jealous Favor press,
Standing her high, carved throne behind, —
A friend at court.

FIRE-WORSHIP.

WHERE goest thou, keen soul of heat,
So bright, so light, so fleet,
Whose wing was never downward bent,
Aye pluming for ascent?
Where goest thou, when, breaking loose
From all mechanic use,
From beacon-head and altar-stone
And hearth of mortal flown,
Thou spreadest through the air apace,
Dissolving in wide space?

Continually the waters fall;
Springs, torrents, rivers, — all,
Drawn downward to the gathering deep,
Remain within its keep.
But thou to the empyrean sea,
Bright upward stream, dost flee,
Where stars and sun are lost to sight,
Drowned in exceeding light.

Continually, in strength and pride,
The great ships cut the tide;
The waters fall, and these descend
Unto their journey's end.

But who, upborne on wing of thine,
Shall reach thy goal divine?
Thither, O rapt and holy Fire, —
Thither bid me aspire,
That, when my spirit's flame burns free,
It shall ascend with thee.

How shall we know when he comes for whom are these garlands of bay?
How single him forth from the many that pass and repass on their way?

Easily may ye discern him, and beckon him forth from the throng;
Ye surely shall know him by this, — he hath slept on the Mountain of Song.

Many are they that go thither, many the guests of the day;
Few till the cool of the eve, till the kindling of Hesperus, stay.

But he, all night on the sward, lay couched by a murmuring spring;
Sleeping he lay, yet he heard from the covert the nightingale sing, —

Heard the faint rustle of leaves astir in the breath of the South,
Felt the soft lips of the dryad laid on his eyelids and mouth:

So slept till the stars were all folded; till, bright on
the dim mountain lawn,
The Muses came singing to wake him, pouring the
wine of the dawn!

For him are these garlands of bay; yet show us more
clearly the sign:
How shall we know, beyond doubt, he hath slept on
the mountain divine?

Know by the dew on his raiment, his forehead, and
clustering hair;
Dew of the night on Parnassus he for a token shall
wear.

Look, how the diamond is caught in the fringe of the
meadow unshorn!
Look, how the rose has its rubies, the lily its pearls
from the morn!

Such is the song of the poet, — a blossom bred up in
the dew;
Mobile the drop at its heart, creating all beauty anew.

THE REPLY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD.

Across the ages, blithe and clear,
I hear thy song, O shepherd dear!
Thy suit I hear, and sigh, alas,
That words so sweet must vainly pass.
I cannot come and live with thee,
Shepherd, thy love I cannot be:
For thou art constant, plain, and true;
I, fond of all that 's strange and new, —
Exotic gardens, gems of price,
And trappings rich, and skilled device,
And speed that vies with wingèd winds,
Yet runs too slow for vanward minds!
Soon would I drain thy promised joys,
Soon would despise thy country toys;
In each thy gifts would find some flaw:
A posied cap, a belt of straw,
A lamb's-wool gown, a kirtle fine,
Not long would please such heart as mine.
Thy trilling birds would soon become
So irksome I should wish them dumb;
And in the tinkling waterfall
I 'd hear but vexèd spirits call,
With Gorgon looks I 'd turn to rocks
Thy merry fellows and their flocks.

Shouldst thou a bed with roses strew,
And line it with the poppy, too,
Thy tenderest care would never do, —
Some hateful thorn would still prick through!
In riddles I would ever speak,
And puzzle thee with whim and freak;
I am distrustful, veering, sad;
With subtle tongue I 'd drive thee mad:
And so, for very love of thee,
Shepherd, thy love I will not be!

OMENS.

As, ere the storm, a silence fills the world,
No blade is stirred, no banner is unfurled,
In conscious field or wood;
So, all the morning, hushed and tranced with fear,
I seemed to see a messenger draw near,
Whose errand was not good.
I turned, and lo! within the open door,
The one I deemed beset with perils sore
Close by me, smiling, stood.

I know not why (I said that summer night)
The heart in me should be so wondrous light,
So sweet each moment's breath:
Assurance kind greets me from every star;
The all-gathering breeze, that hastens from afar, —
How glad a thing it saith!
That was the night my friend beyond the seas,
Within a tent beneath the olive trees,
Turned his blue eyes on death.

THE WEATHER-VANE.

A WEATHER-VANE am I,
Close neighbor to the sky;
My gilded shaft I fly
As any wind directs, I heed not where nor why.

The North Wind draws his bow,
And to the mark I go;
The East Wind's aim I show,
And pleasant Zephyr, and the South Wind murmuring low.

So all goes well and fair,
Till, in the lists of air,
All four their standards bear:
Four winds to serve at once! I whirl in wild despair!

A weather-vane am I
(Close neighbor to the sky),
That, from my station high,
'Mong mortal men full many a weather-vane descry.

To what shall I compare
The veering mind I bear?
Yon minion of the air,
Yon gilded shaft, my chosen emblem I declare.

I turn about, about,
Controlled by every rout
That trains with Hope or Doubt;
Who smiles, I smile again, or answer flout with flout.

Within the draft I 'm caught
Of all prevailing thought;
By many masters taught,
Their varying precepts I confuse and bring to naught.

A changeling me they call:
I have no stay in all,
No shield, no rampart-wall;
I safely drift about, — let others stand or fall!

I bend, I do not break;
I light obeisance make
To scourging storms, that rake
The harvest from the field and shattered forests take.

Since nothing here I see
Save mutability,
With it I will agree;
Yea, I on Change's cap the nodding plume will be.

Some good remains behind:
The clear perceiving mind
In me, at least, shall find
An index true of all the tempers of the wind!

YOUTH IN AGE.

Soul of youth shut up in age,
Like a wood-bird in a cage,
Or a stream that 's winter-bound,
Flowing on with prisoned sound,
Oft in olden tales I 've read
How some arch-enchanter spread
Winter snows on youthful head,
Making Twenty Summers go
With a staff, infirm and slow,
Till some charm or talisman
Could be found to break the ban!
Such a captive, if thou be
Would that I might set thee free:
First, unweave the silver weft,
That across thy brow was left,
Give thee back the ebon tress,
Shadowing its loveliness:
Then, if I could touch thy hand,
Lightly, with restoring wand,
Where 's the lily, bred below,
That a whiter grace could show?
If, once more, upon thy cheek,
Tidings from the heart could speak,
Where 's the rose that would be proud?
And if I could chase the cloud

That makes twilight of thine eyes,
Two full, brilliant stars would rise,
Such as lovers call their own,
When the day has blushed and flown!
Couldst thou beat back tided time,
Thou and I for joy would climb
All the new-cleft ways of life,
Like two heralds set a strife:
But the years between us flow, —
As I enter, thou must go;
Yet our greeting-time was worth
A full period of the earth!

FLOWN BIRDS.

Could we but know where henceforth they abide
Whose carols from our garden trees have died, —
We, who but feel the season grow unkind,
That they have left behind!

Here are their nests, their falling, wind-racked nests,
Despisèd homes, whose builders now are guests
In some bright, alien land we never saw,
Some clime that breathes no flaw.

They in their flight wake the light sleeper, Spring;
In frostless groves they stir their wings and sing;
Green boughs and waving meadows green are theirs,
To haunt in happy pairs.

Who marks their flittings amid glossy leaves?
Who bids them welcome under friendly eaves?
What names, in mellow tongues to us unknown,
Do they henceforward own?

We have no prescience, no remembrance they;
Let be. Grief crosses not their blessed way.
Be glad they know not of our waning year,
And storms that gather here.

ST. CECILIA.

God gave this mastery to my mind, —
The soul of music to unbind
From every wandering wave and wind,
Green sod and tree.
In earth and air, in rocks, in fire,
I read mute measures of desire;
On organ reeds or flashing lyre,
I set them free.

A lute unto my voice He gave;
And when the cloudy censers wave,
And fragrant twilight fills the nave,
Who worships then,
With heart sublimed, — it seems to him
He hears the breathless cherubim,
Far up in pictured transept dim,
Join praise with men!

Some say that I a spirit am;
That where I pass the air grows calm
And soother than a chanted psalm
At vesper chime;
And that my eyes are full of rest,
As are the eyes of all the Blest,
When first on hands, and brow, and breast,
Floats Heaven's soft clime.

And this may be: I cannot tell
If yet upon the earth I dwell,
Or softly, without death or knell,
Have passed from earth.
The light that shines before my way
Shines ever as the orient day;
My heart is fuller than the May
Of songs and mirth.

Sometimes, on dead midwinter night,
When gardens lie in folded white,
And giddy stars slide out of sight,
Past cliffs of ice, —
Lo! suddenly an angel stands
With fair red roses in his hands,
Dew-wet, and plucked in morning lands
Of Paradise!

LIFE AND DEATH.

"Thou to life, and I to death,
God alone knows which is best:"
Wisdom of the ages saith.
In the dusking of the west
Lifts a curling censer-cloud,
As to say that now are bowed,
Unto toneless vesper chimes,
Spirits folded from all times;
But we do not know.

Thou to waken, every morn,
To the voices round the eaves;
To the hum of growing corn,
And the lisp of tender leaves!
Thou shalt bring me lilies white
(Such as I may wear to-night!),
And shalt bid them bloom for me,
In the place of cypress-tree;
But I shall not know.

I to lie within the land,
While it laughs with sun and rain,
While the summer's flame is fanned,
And the woods are like a fane,

Full of holy, mystic stirs,
Where the birds are choristers;
I to shut my eyes so fast
That no light can glimmer past!
Nay! but dost thou know?

Since the world was fashioned thus,
Sown with life that flowers in death,
None that pass return to us,
When they lose the air's sweet breath.
We may dream they throng the wind,
That our eyes alone are blind;
Say they live again on earth,
Presences that guard the hearth;
But we do not know.

Thou to life, and I to death;
Thou to bide, and I to run,
Like a ray that hasteneth,
On the hill-tops, when the sun
Through the evening-gate has gone.
Every sunset 's faced with dawn
To the men that dwell far west:
Dusk or daybreak, — God knows best;
But we do not know.

INAUGURAL.

MARCH 4, 1881.

O Day! what triumph and what song
To thee belong?
What voice along the sentient wire,
Like a wild-running fire,
Bears the all-hail and heartening of the land
To him who takes the new command?

O Day! fruition of the people's choice!
Who is this chosen by the people's voice?
What charter can he show,
By which all men may know
His hands are high and just,
His counsels worthy trust?

Ye people! one of you, the best of you,
Uniting all, stands up within your view;
Whate'er in you reside
Of spirit staunch and tried,
Of faith resolved and sure,
Of patience to endure,
Of truth, not merchandized,
Of honor, higher prized
Than fame's or fortune's count,
Of valor to surmount

The hedge of circumstance;
To stay, or to advance;
To stand forth sole in unexampled act,
And still to keep the private life intact;
To meet the country's call;
To give the life for life of all, —
Whatever names you wise and strong and great
Among the nations held in honored state,
He whom to-day ye celebrate
(A king of men ye celebrate), —
He all includes, he fills the estimate!
Now, whosoe'er ye be,
Hailed freedmen, or born free,
Whoe'er ye be that toil
In labor's complex coil,
By dint of hand, or brain,
Ye, too, are sovereign!
He being one of you,
He nothing does that is not done of you.
Close by your ruler stand,
Oh, all ye rulers of the land!
Is, then, dominion sweet?
Self-mastery first is meet:
He bears himself above the rest of us,
Alone because he strove and conquered thus.

O Day! such triumph and such song
To thee belong;
Such voice along the sentient wire,
Like a wild-running fire,
Bears the all-hail and heartening of the land
To him who takes the new command.

CUTHBERT.

Of old, from storied Lammermoor, the youthful Cuthbert went
Through all the Lowlands, far and wide, on blessed mission sent.

An angel's face, a peasant frame, stout-hearted, strong of limb;
The people hear their native tongue in every sweet-voiced hymn.

They come from rugged toil afield, they drop their shuttles rude,
To serve the guest; he serves their hearts with heavenly drink and food.

Or mounted now, or now afoot, with pilgrim staff in hand,
There is no wild he hath not traced, in all Northumberland:

At morn, with shepherds on the hills, his matin anthem rings;
He hastens on, and in the vale his even-song he sings;

Or, seaward, on some sylvan stream he holds his
course aright,
And many a shore-built hamlet greets, a messenger of
light!

Winter and night upon the sea, high waves and winds
at strife,
The snow-cloud lowering thick and fast on the icy
coast of Fife!

What boat is this that scarce can live, among the bil-
lows tossed?
What crew is this, whose hearts must fail, fear-bound,
and numb with frost?

True Cuthbert dares to be where'er God's signal goes
before:
As safe to him the rocking sea as is the stable shore.

"No way remains!" his comrades cry. "Oh, whither
shall we go?
The storm forbids us on the sea, and on the shore the
snow!"

Above the surge rose Cuthbert's voice, bright glanced
his fearless eye:
"One way remains: the way of heaven doth always
open lie."

Doth open lie? Oh, pilot word! Let me remember aye,
Though shore and sea afford no pass, there 's yet a
starward way!

THE FIRESIDE IN THE SNOW.

I, LOOKING through the pane to-night,
  Beheld my fireside's steady glow,
A blooming plot of warmth and light,
  Amid a waste of snow.

Beneath the sighing winter boughs,
  Still-imaged in the stormy flaw,
The lamplight on their open brows,
  My dearest-loved I saw:

The child above his fairy-book,
  His mother at her evening work,
While all about the ingle-nook
  The hungry shadows lurk.

There is no stir, no uttered word,
  To chase the visionary scene;
Only the whistling wind is heard,
  The snow-flakes drift between.

Beat, storm, against the magic pale!
  Inviolate they sit within,
In light and peace that cannot fail,
  To dreams of heaven akin.

. . . . . .

I turn me from the window-pane.
What if the years were strangely fled,
And this were painting of the brain,
Hearth, lamp, and housemates sped?

I only left, and sadly joyed
To trace, by reminiscent light,
These lovely forms against the void
Of the white winter's night?

The mother at her evening task,
The child above his fairy-tale,
Still, by a charmèd hearth would bask,
And beckon through the gale!

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

Oh, sleep, my children, sleep!
Lie close together on your cold, hard bed.
What have ye now but sleep? The fire is dead,
And there remains but one poor crust of bread,
That I against your hungry waking keep.

Oh, sleep, my children, sleep!
The timbers groan with frost, and creaks the floor;
The moonlight glances on the panes all hoar;
The wind heaps up the snow against the door.
A voice I hear; outside, some child doth weep.

My children are asleep;
But thou, young lamb, wide straying from the fold,
I pity thee, feet bleeding, numb with cold.
Eat thou their bread, — a morsel dry and old;
To warm thyself, beneath their cover creep.

Sleep well, my children, sleep!
And thou, too, sleep, poor wanderer, till the day.
What vexeth thee? Wilt thou no longer stay?
How strangely gone! No footprint marks the way,
But flowers start through the drift so smooth and deep!

O children, leave your sleep!
Come hither, come, and see this wondrous thing, —
Rough Winter to his bosom folds the Spring!
A holy guest to us the night did bring;
These flowers he left; himself we could not keep.

My children, leave your sleep, —
Leave empty dreaming on your cold, hard bed!
For now the house is light, the hearth blooms red;
Be hungry now no more; with meat and bread
Do heavenly hands unseen the table heap.

THEANO.

"THE sacred rites of Eleusis, Demeter's mysteries old,
Hath Alcibiades mocked, profaning with mimicry bold;
Wherefore, ye priests and priestesses, hear what the city commands:
Spare not, but curse, Alcibiades, lifting your reverend hands."

Not loath were they of the temples to hear and obey the decree, —
Not loath were they all save one; fair daughter of Menon was she.
"Obey, if ye will, man's word. By me shall the gods be obeyed.
Lo! I am here, not for cursing; a priestess for prayer was I made!"

Praise to thee, daughter of Menon, star of Agraulos's fane!
Praise to thee, steadfast Theano! Thy words bright-blazoned remain;
Forgotten are theirs, who from altars of wrath their malisons hurled.
So ever: the curse falls void, the prayer wins the heart of the world.

A SONG OF REST.

Speed on, O Time, with winning feet!
Chime silver victory, clear and sweet!
I shall not overtake thee soon.
Like some faint reaper under noon
Caught softly to the earth's warm breast, —
So here I rest.

O Earth, I have not wandered far;
I never saw the nearest star
That shines beneath our nightly verge;
I never rode the eastern surge,
Nor climbed the summits in the west;
But here I rest.

O Song, Love, Life, farewell to you!
I swayed among you like the dew
Shared between morning sun and wind:
Ye still are fair and free and kind,
Yet grieve I not, though dispossessed;
For here I rest.

I said to Song: Farewell a day,
Till there be taught me some fresh lay

By sleep and dreaming, yet unsung . . .
They teach divine things in a tongue
The perfect silence suiteth best;
So here I rest.

I said to Love: Thy lips and eyes
Take hence, be gathered to the skies,
And keep no more thy troth with me.
My heart no longer beats in thee,
And thine no longer in my breast;
For here I rest.

Is 't thou, O Sleep, that pourest balm,
With faint rose lips and eyes of calm,
Or thou that strewest asphodel?
Or Sleep, or Death, — I cannot tell:
But thou art come a welcome guest;
And here I rest.

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM.

I 'VE sailed the sea these many years,
  Yet stout my heart, undimmed my eye;
Whene'er I meet my sailing peers,
  "All 's well!" I to their shout reply.

These many years I 've sailed the sea,
  Been tossed by tempest, bound by calm;
My freight was orient spicery,
  And fruitage of the Indian palm.

Far lighter is my laden bark
  Than when it left the Morning Shore:
To 'scape the waters, hoarse and dark,
  I freely cast abroad my store.

Of this, some part, in secret caves,
  Lies mixed with dim, unfooted sands;
Some part is borne upon the waves
  To richly portion barren strands.

I would some wrecker there might be
  Where'er my noble freightage drifts,
To whom the undiscerning sea
  Might bring these stolen things as gifts:

Thou shivering dweller by the sands,
  Look what to thee a bankrupt sends!
What falls to thine unweeting hands
  Shall house thee, feed thee, make thee friends.

I 've sailed the sea these many years,
  Yet stout my heart, undimmed my eye;
Whene'er I meet my sailing peers,
  "All 's well!" I to their shout reply.

Now close at hand the roadstead lies,
  Nor shall I shame to enter there,
Though my good ship hath lost her prize, —
  Keel split, and masts beyond repair!

MENDING THE ROSE.

My little friend, who not till now
  Has seen the June and roses,
Receives my gift with wondering brow,
  His soft hand round it closes.

What, canker at the rose's core!
  The rose's fate is calling;
A single leaf, then two, then more,
  Like early snowflakes falling.

My little friend, not ev'n for you
  Time's beckoned creatures linger.
But you 've a plan: show what you 'd do,
  With leaf 'twixt thumb and finger.

You 'd set it on the stem again,
  And make the rose bloom newly;
You 'd keep the wizard's promise vain, —
  Ah, could you keep it truly!

THE NIGHT-WIND.

Once, when the night-wind clapped its wings,
And shook the window-bars and roof,
I heard the souls of battle-kings
Drive by in clashing proof!

Sometimes, a runic strife it kept,
Of winter nights, in sleeted trees;
Or underneath the eaves it crept, —
A swarm of murmuring bees.

Or, now, wild huntsmen of the air
In hollow chase their bugles blew,
While swift o'er wood and hill-top bare
The shrill-voiced quarry flew.

Sometimes I heard of lovers flown,
Safe, under ward of storm and night,
To where, in sylvan lodge, there shone
A taper kind and bright.

These things the night-wind used to tell,
And still would tell, if I might hear;
But sorrow sleeps too sound and well
To lend a dreamful ear.

POPPIES IN OUR WHEAT.

Let no blame upon us fall,
Thrifty ones of cot and hall,
That, while ye take care to hoard
Corn and wine for winter's board,
We beside the hedgerow lie,
Heedless how bright hours go by.
Wonder not we dread no want,
When the year is bare and gaunt:
Idle bread we have to eat, —
Poppies grew amidst our wheat.

Blame not us, ye revelers blithe,
Who have lodged the rake and scythe,
And with fan and flail no more
Tread the granary's breezy floor:
Though, with humming wire and flute,
The boon Season well ye suit,
Call us not by word or glance;
We will neither feast nor dance.
Blame not us that sleep is sweet, —
Poppies grew amidst our wheat.

APRIL CAPRICES.

So fresh and fair the morning was, —
All in the early spring,
Love pitched his tent upon the grass,
A silken thing.

There came a black cloud up the sky,
The thunder beat tattoo;
The rain came down, with gusty sigh,
And drenched Love through.

He clapped his snowy, dove-like fans,
And shook his curls out dry:
"You, April, think to spoil my plans;
Too wise am I!"

Then Love went muffled to the throat
In a rich purple cloak;
He set adrift his wingèd boat,
With airy stroke.

The clouds rolled back, the soft sky laughed,
The sun shone warm and bright;
Straight through a rainbow shot Love's craft,
In various light.

His purple cloak he casts away,
And calls a zephyr-breeze:
"You, April, are my own sweet fay,
Do what you please!"

A RAINBOW.

LARGE glistening drops stood in her eyes,
  But yet could win no leave to flow;
And I, not willing to surprise
  The tears she would not show,—
    I looked another way.
Some smiling words, at last, she spake;
  Then down the tears dropped unconfined.
This sun and shower conspired to make
  A rainbow in my mind,
    That lingers to this day.

A BEE IN MY BONNET.

Hush, hush! there 's a bee in my bonnet!
I know by the humming I hear;
Have a care not to venture too near!
No bustle, no beating alarms,
As when you hive fugitive swarms;
But here let me sit a half hour
'Mong flowers, as still as a flower;
And this mischief that tickles my brain
Perhaps will be tempted to drain
Some of the sweets that abound
In this plot of blossoming ground.
But softly, already we 've won it!

Aha! this bee in my bonnet
Makes honey the whole country over, —
From daisy and kingcup and clover,
Cornflower and thistle and rue,
And sips up the eglantine dew;
Then dives into sorcerers' bowers,
To taste of their opiate flowers;
Sleeps with the poppy and lote
And Ganges' gold lily afloat;
Or, lit on the candied edge
Of Ganymede's cup, steals a pledge, —
Though his eyes are fastened upon it!

DIABLERIE.

'T is a night of the witches,
Of goblins and witches!
See how they hover,
Starting out of their niches
Among the black trees!
The Moon 's ill at ease,
Lest the mob should have spied her,
And hastens to cover
Her face in a cloud,
Or diaphanous shroud,
Too sleazy to hide her!
And not only witches,
(Grewsome with beards)
Goblins and witches,
In all keys and pitches
Chanting their weirds;
Not only ghosts, jostling,
In yonder dim alley,
Where ghosts wont to rally,
But I hear a low rustling
And whistling behind me, —
Footsteps behind me
On the hard frozen ground!
I dare not look round,

Lest Terror should blind me,
Should chill me, and bind me,
And I, next morning, in marble be found!

On it comes lightly,
Over stones skipping,
On the turf tripping;
Something more sprightly
Than witches, I fancy,
Worse necromancy!
But face about,
Charge on the rout,
Whatever betide me!
Ah, now I see clearly, —
'T is a dead leaf merely;
A dead leaf! no wonder
The Moon, peering under
That skurrying cloud, looks out to deride me!

SING-IN-THE-WINTER.

Once before Winter had gathered his forces,
And driven the rivers back on their courses,
Roaming the uplands, I found in the heather
Waif of the summer, bird of strange feather;
And I caught it,
And brought it
In from the weather.

In from the weather, from wanton molesting,
Found it a shelter, a place for its nesting,
High in the sunny south-side of my aerie;
It fluted wild airs from the Land of the Faery;
And I tamed it,
And named it
Sing-in-the-Winter.

The neighbors flocked in with complaints at the season, —
"Rhymes keep a poet, but we must have reason," —
Scoffed at my comfort and scowled at the season;
But high in the rafter was chanted sweet treason:
Did they hear it,
Sweet spirit,
Sing-in-the-Winter?

Off from the highway came curious townsmen,
Tradesmen and craftsmen, and schoolmen and gownsmen;
Merry or wise only tarried a minute: —
"A ground-bird, — a swallow, — at best, but a linnet!"
Did they hear it,
Sweet spirit,
Sing-in-the-Winter?

Late on an evening, a starry-eyed stranger
Sat by my fire: "Friend, you know not your danger;
You 've caught the Arabian bird, the wing'd rapture,
That, long ago lost, there was none could recapture:
If you prize it,
Disguise it, —
Sing-in-the-Winter!"

GAFFER TIME.

"Oh, where are you going, old Gaffer Time,
This morning in May,
The sweet o' the day?"
"Wherever you will, pretty boy and girl, —
Wherever you say!"

"Then, go we no further, but sit down here,
At the head of the lane,
While you sing us again
The songs of your youth, and my love and I
Knit a daisy chain.

"Sit we down here in the pleasant grass;
And that we may be
Better friends — all three —
Give to my love your glass to hold,
And your scythe to me."

Old Gaffer Time, he laughed full loud, —
Full loud and blithe,
(Snatching his tithe):
"Ho! you would have broken the glass, and you
Would have blunted the scythe!"

A LIGHT ROUND.

UNDER the oak, and under the birk,
Dance a light round;
Under the May moon, treading a cirque
On the mossy ground!

Soft hand to hand, and oft lip to lip,
Dance a light round;
Thus it is that we fairies trip
O'er enchanted ground.

Now, where shall we find a mortal fair,
Fit to be crowned?
And where shall we find a minstrel rare,
To lead our light round?

A lady I know, both fair and good,
Fit to be crowned;
And a minstrel I know, in the heart of the wood,
Will lead your light round.

Bring her to us, the fair and the good, —
She shall be crowned;
Bring us the minstrel out of the wood,
To lead our light round.

Oh, the lady lies in her bower asleep,
With a strange wound;
And the minstrel is gone through the forest deep,—
He leads a light round!

Under the oak, and under the birk,
Break off our light round;
Fade all away in the morning mirk,
Fade underground!

SPEEDWELL.

FARE thee well, thou too light-hearted!
The tear to thine eye hath not started;
Grieves thee not we must be parted?
Framed with the morning I see thee;
I go, and leave the morn with thee;
Shall I have no token, I prithee?
Heed well!

Faintly she smiles; bending slowly,
Gathers a flower growing lowly, —
A flower with a legend holy:
Her breath through the blossom sighing
Sets its light petals flying;
Sweet is love's mute replying, —
Speedwell!

LAUREL.

WHAT 's this hue and cry of "laurel,"
Muses' suitors in a quarrel, —
Food for wise men's mirth!
What 's in laurel? What is laurel
More than yarrow, brake, or sorrel,
Common tribes o' the earth!

Any other plant 's as holy,
Arbute, caprifole, or moly,
Ivy in the mesh;
Heart's-ease, good for melancholy;
Jessamine, for pleasure solely;
Hawthorn, gay and fresh.

Can it be that Daphne, hidden,
Smiles among the leaves unchidden —
(Faithless runaway!)
Oh, I think 't is Daphne, hidden,
Gives the bush its charm forbidden, —
Daphne, in the bay!

MUSAGETES.

I ONCE did dream Apollo bright
  Was leader of the Muses nine,
Who followed him from pure delight,
  The while he touched his lyre divine.

But now, alas! how changed the plan!
  The Muses I indeed behold;
But Mercury marches in their van,
  His lyre a purse of jingling gold.

SYRINX.

Come forth, too timid spirit of the reed!
Leave thy plashed coverts and elusions shy,
And find delight at large in grove and mead.
No ambushed harm, no wanton peering eye;
The shepherd's uncouth god thou need'st not fear, —
Pan has not passed this way for many a year.

'T is but the vagrant wind that makes thee start, —
The pleasure-loving south, the freshening west;
The willow's woven veil they softly part,
To fan the lily on the stream's warm breast:
No ruder stir, no footstep pressing near, —
Pan has not passed this way for many a year.

Whether he lies in some mossed wood, asleep,
And heeds not how the acorns drop around,
Or in some shelly cavern near the deep,
Lulled by its pulses of eternal sound,
He wakes not, answers not our sylvan cheer, —
Pan has been gone this many a silent year.

Else we had seen him, through the mists of morn,
To upland pasture lead his bleating charge:

There is no shag upon the stunted thorn,
No hoof-print on the river's silver marge;
Nor broken branch of pine, nor ivied spear, —
Pan has not passed that way for many a year.

O tremulous elf, reach me a hollow pipe,
The best and smoothest of thy mellow store!
Now I may blow till Time be hoary ripe,
And listening streams forsake the paths they wore:
Pan loved the sound, but now will never hear, —
Pan has not trimmed a reed this many a year!

And so, come freely forth, and through the sedge
Lift up a dimpled, warm, Arcadian face,
As on that day when fear thy feet did fledge,
And thou didst safely win the breathless race. . . .
I am deceived: nor Pan nor thou art here, —
Pan has been gone this many a silent year!

SOUTH AND WEST.

HERE in the depth of the land, where the hills are a shade and a silence,
Listening, I hear the myriad, mounting feet of the tides,
As they follow the moon, their white priestess, to kneel by the tropical islands,
Fair in the South and the West, where thy ship at anchorage rides.

Clear are the silver skies, when the planets of autumn are shining, —
Clear in the South and the West, with ght on the ways of the waves:
Every star is a pilot to thee; each planet, declining,
Shines full on thy haven, and sinks with its lamp to Hesperean caves.

Sweet in the South and the West is the parley of winds with the ocean;
The shells on the strand are the cloisters of spirits that whisper and sing.
Oh, sweet in the South and the West is the music of forests in motion,
Happy the valley a river all golden weds with his ring!

Rich in the South and the West are the houses of treasure unquarried,
Builded of old without entrance and guarded by indwelling fire;
Many a presence in purple, many a kingly cold forehead,
Crowned with high winter, looks down on a land of delight and desire.

Far in the South and the West — oh, farther than flight of the swallow —
Hast climbed the last wave where sun and stars descend to their bath!
I would fit me a sail, and follow thy traces as Summer follows,
Winged with adventurous winds that murmur glad things in thy path!

A PARALLEL.

A GRAPE-SEED, in the new red wine afloat,
Put endless pause to blithe Anacreon's note;
Thus antic Death, with light and sportive hand,
The pampered life from out its flower-nook fanned.
But tragic Otway, stung by hunger's thrust,
In breaking fast was choked upon a crust.
Still antic Death! — to make the prop of life
Serve the same end as fatal cord or knife!

SUB ROSA.

Is there any one now that knows
What a world of mystery lies deep down in the heart of a rose,
Shaded by curtains of damask or cloistered in summer snows?

Does any one now understand
That roses are first in favor with her who is queen in Love's Land, —
Fair maidens, who come and go at the beck of her sovereign hand?

While Adonis sleeps on, a half year,
In her magical midwinter garden, vacant of hope as of fear,
She calls her attendants, the red and white roses, and bids them be near,

To winnow the air, gently swaying,
And whisper, bent low by his pillow, many a tremulous saying
From the missal of Sorrow and Love, to chide his drowsy delaying.

In that garden the frost never nips,
But tears of the constant white roses fall, melting his vision's eclipse,
And red roses' kisses, repeated, bloom red on his cheeks and his lips!

What word from Love's Country, this morn,
What tidings, O Rose, have you brought? Is it time of the flower or the thorn?
What mood sways its whimsical people, — consenting, or doubting, or scorn?

Is the air still laden with sighs,
As I knew it of old? Do they speak the same language of candor and lies,
Leaving a part to shy silence, the rest to the lips and the eyes?

AT THE SPRING.

I.

What dost thou here, so wayward sad,
Where leaves and grass grow summer-glad?
What dost thou here, day in and out?
Hast thou no task to be about,
No thread to ply, no song to sing,
While softly drips the spring?

II.

Thou art so quiet in the shade,
Shy creatures here play unafraid;
With curious looks they come and go;
The hardy wood-thrush, stooping low,
Doth all but touch thee with her wing,
While softly drips the spring.

III.

Bestir thyself, or thou shalt see
The ivy growing over thee;
Green fingers of the gypsy vine
Round thy white wasting fingers twine,
And clasp thy wrists with many a ring,
While softly drips the spring.

IV.

There came a stranger here (she sighed), —
Hot noon it was, midsummer tide;
He asked a draught of water cool
From yonder deep, untainted pool,
Which gladly I did draw and bring.
Now bitter runs the spring.

V.

He raised the goblet, kissed the edge,
And me within the draught did pledge:
"So sweet a cooling cup I vow
My parchèd lips ne'er touched till now;"
He gazed and said, low murmuring.
Now bitter runs the spring.

VI.

His words, so grave, did all belie
The light of laughter in his eye:
"Be here when I return, full soon,
To serve again thy grateful boon;
Be here," he said, "to draw and bring."
Now bitter runs the spring.

VII.

I wait; I would not hence be missed;
I keep the goblet that he kissed;
But, if he comes not, let the vine
Weave over me its meshes fine,
And let the thrush kind strewments bring.
Now bitter runs the spring.

THE ELFIN KNIGHT.

Heer is the queen of fayerie,
With harp and lute and symphonye,
Dwellyng in this place.
Chaucer.

I.

I HAVE a sword of temper true,
A coat of armor, bright and new,
A barb as fleet as Zephyr's self:
I seek nor state nor golden pelf,
But that I worthy deeds may do.

Soft ease and pleasures I eschew.
To be thy virgin knight I sue,
Great Queen of every fay and elf!
What is thy will?

I see thee glassed in twinkling dew,
And in all waters still and blue;
Thy tapers shine in glen and delf,
Thy foot doth print the sandy shelf;
I trace thee by no doubtful clue:
What is thy will?

II.

My sword was broken at the heft,
My armor ta'en by shameful theft;

My steed of Barbary I lent
To one most seeming-innocent,
Who rode away with promise deft.

Was ever knight so strangely reft?
Stout heart and hand alone are left,
And these to thee I do present:
I serve thee still.

Though all thine elves, in copse and cleft,
Mock as I pass, and spread a weft
To take my feet, I fare content;
Though youth be flown and fortune spent,
Stout heart and hand to me are left:
I serve thee still.

ACROSS THE WORLD I SPEAK TO THEE.

Across the world I speak to thee;
Where'er thou art (I know not where),
Send thou a messenger to me!

I here remain, who would be free,
To seek thee out through foul or fair;
Across the world I speak to thee.

Whether beneath the tropic tree,
The cooling night wind fans thy hair,
Send thou a messenger to me!

Whether upon the rushing sea,
A foamy track thy keel doth wear,
Across the world I speak to thee.

Whether in yonder star thou be,
A spirit loosed in purple air,
Send thou a messenger to me.

Hath Heaven not left thee memory
Of what was well in mortal's share?
Across the world I speak to thee;
Send thou a messenger to me!

THE BIRCH TREE.

In the laurel, so they say,
Timid Daphne hides alway;
Atys sleeps within the pine,
Lulled by melodies divine;
Cyparissus, choosing well,
Had the cypress for his cell;
And the Daughters of the Sun
For their lodge the poplar won:
Who can tell what spirits lurk
In the silver-fringèd birk?
Not I! for the days are gone
When the secret could be drawn
From the rugged heart of trees,
By a poet's sorceries.
But if now some Indian bard
Might break through the matted sward,
He could tell us, without fail,
Who 't is wears the birken mail!

THE MOURNING-DOVE.

Listen! A voice of tears from the wooded hill,
Now broken and lost, now waking its plaint anew;
I heard it in summer's youth, I hear it still:
"Who, who, who?"
Only this; but I catch at the slender clue,
And follow it back till I reach the heart of a song:
"Who, who, who delays thee so long?"

"Who meets thee amid the rustling full-eared maize?
Who, where the trees of strength their ripeness strew,
Or where the willow above her mirror sways?
Who, who, who?
Who and where? I call thee, the long day through;
Come thou wouldst, if thy love as thy wings were strong.
Who, who, who delays thee so long?"

It is the wild dove's vanishing note I hear.
She sits her nest, and darkness and sun and dew
Touch her soft throat, but never to utterance clear:
"Who, who, who?"
Only this; but I catch at the slender clue,
And follow it back till I reach the heart of a wrong:
"Who, who, who delays thee so long?"

DEAD LOVE.

Ay, so it is: Love died of wrong;
Nor we nor heaven can now revive him,
He needed not the priest to shrive him;
For this dead Love had done no wrong,
All his life long.

Oh, try whatever test you will!
His breath will never mist your mirror,
Nor stir the feather held down nearer.
Oh, try whatever test you will!
He 's cold and still.

It is not known what death he died, —
The world shall be deceived by fables;
We wear no cypress and no sables.
It is not known what death he died, —
That 's ours to hide!

What if they see his empty place?
Then say, he goeth with a message,
Flying with summer birds of passage;
And, doubtless, he 'll return apace
To his own place.

Revenge ? The heart is not in me.
Love, dying, smiled on his betrayer ;
And so, I cannot smite the slayer, —
Ah, no ! The heart is not in me,
Dead though Love be.

I still will love the soul of Love,
Though his fair mortal shape be vanished ;
I will not be cast out nor banished ; —
I still will love the soul of Love
Withdrawn above.

OUT OF THE SEA.

Still was the night after storm when a vision came
to my pillow, —
Up from the never-hushed sea, dim-clothed in the
sweep of the billow.

Spake the gray presence, in voice like the wind through
a cavern low sighing:
Down by the cliff, on the sands, a wonderful thing is
lying;
Not whiter the breast of the swan, not brighter the
mermaiden's tresses;
In its hand is a shell of the waves, in its hair are sea-
weeds and cresses.
It lies, soft-kissed by the spray, by the murmuring surf
overtaken;
Even the old Sea pities a creature so fair and forsaken!

Wave-like the vision receded. I followed its swift re-
treating,
Under the cliff, on the sands; but, O my beloved, what
a greeting!
Thou it was, lying so cold and so fair, with deep mov-
ing round thee:
Thus through the storm thou hadst come to me, — thus
I had found, and not found, thee!

THE STIRRUP CUP.

This is vintage of the ages,
Best to cool the fever's rages;
He that drinks it when 't is beading
Hath a quick and happy speeding.

I 've known joy, and I 've known sorrow,
Care that broods upon the morrow;
I 've been trist, and I 've been merry, —
"Lackaday," and "hey down derry"!
I 've been free, and I 've been fettered, —
Fortunes ill, and fortunes bettered;
I 've been crafty, I 've been simple,
Courted Wisdom, wooed a dimple!
I 've known faith, and I 've known treason, —
Frost-nipt flowers in summer season;
I 've seen feasts and flush cups sparkling,
Guests dispersed and torches darkling;
I 've known Love, and ah, the pity!
Heard his knell and funeral ditty:
Hapless seeing, fatal knowing!
Drain the cup, and I 'll be going.

In this vintage, stored for ages,
I will pledge the souls of sages,

Princes, heroes, bards, and lovers,
Whom the night of Old Time covers.
I will drink as deep as they did,
See the dreams their eyelids shaded ;
I shall find what planets hold them,
What rose-bowers and myrtles fold them ;
I shall hear the talk of sages
As they turn immortal pages, —
Hear the shepherd pipes contending
In a tuneful bout unending ;
I shall see the dancers swaying,
Lovers in the green wood straying,
Children in the fields a-Maying :
Lovely seeing, happy knowing !
Life, good-by ! I would be going !

PATMOS.

All around him Patmos lies,
Who hath spirit-gifted eyes,
Who his happy sight can suit
To the great and the minute.
Doubt not but he holds in view
A new earth and heaven new;
Doubt not but his ear doth catch
Strains nor voice nor reed can match;
Many a silver, sphery note
Shall within his hearing float.

All around him Patmos lies,
Who unto God's priestess flies:
Thou, O Nature, bid him see,
Through all guises worn by thee,
A divine apocalypse.
Manifold his fellowships:
Now the rocks their archives ope;
Voiceless creatures tell their hope
In a language symbol-wrought;
Groves to him sigh out their thought;
Musings of the flower and grass
Through his quiet spirit pass.

'Twixt new earth and heaven new
He hath traced and holds the clue.
Number his delights ye may not;
Fleets the year, but these decay not.
Now the freshets of the rain,
Bounding on from hill to plain,
Show him earthly streams have rise
In the bosom of the skies.
Now he feels the morning thrill,
As upmounts, unseen and still,
Dew the wing of evening drops.
Now the frost, that meets and stops
Summer's feet in tender sward,
Greets him, breathing heavenward.
Hieroglyphics writes the snow,
Through the silence falling slow;
Types of star and petaled bloom
A white missal-page illume.
By these floating symbols fine,
Heaven-truth shall he divine.

All around him Patmos lies,
Who hath spirit-gifted eyes;
He need not afar remove,
He need not the times reprove,
Who would hold perpetual lease
Of an isle in seas of peace.

OAK-CORN.

Hasten, all ye forest-dwellers,
Crowd your garners, fill your cellars!
Oak-corn bread and meat provideth,
That each careful creature hideth
Where the hoar-frost cannot taste it,
Nor the winds in winter waste it.
Come and gather, come and gather,
In the misty autumn weather!

Here it was that faun and satyr,
Long ago, were used to scatter
Acorns in these shady alleys,
Tossing them with sportive sallies;
Sylvan in his crown did bear them;
All the sober wood-nymphs wear them,
More esteemed than gem or jewel.
Acorns, rich in food and fuel,
Feed the flock and shepherd's ingle,
When the frosty planets tingle.
Acorns, where old Merlin slumbers,
Sprout young oaks, in countless numbers,
Through his mossy garments starting,
His long locks and gray beard parting;

While the jay and squirrel chatter,
And the ceaseless showers patter, —
Leaves and acorns, all together,
Dropping in the misty weather.
When he wakens, how he 'll wonder
At the forest he sleeps under !

MOSS.

Deft secreter of the mast,
Holding in thy meshes fast
Russet burr and berry bright,
Filmy seed new-winged for flight, —
Whatso'er the squirrels toss,
As the swinging boughs they cross,
Or the birds, in greedy haste,
From their beaks let go to waste!
Forest, where the hermit snail
Has his shelly cloister frail;
Where, in still security,
Underneath its sheltering tree,
(Dwindled likeness of the fir)
Merry atom life doth stir!
Plant of cool and patient mood,
'Mong the changelings of the wood,
Still unchanging thou dost seem,
Busy ripening thine own scheme.
Thou canst drink, or thirsty go,
Bravest drouth, or flood, or snow.
Summer loves thee, courtier true,
Spreading thy rich mantle new
For her royal feet to press.
Winter loveth thee no less, —

Furry robe of frozen knolls,
Shaggy locks on aged boles,
Where, in most mysterious ways,
Air thy chosen food purveys.
If the sun but shine an hour,
Thou dost own his genial power;
Like a sun-glass out of sight,
But still conscious of the light,
Hidden savant, thou canst draw
Warmth enough to make a flaw
In the snow above thee spread,
Pushing upward thy dark head!
Let me heed thy thankful skill
That finds good in seasons ill;
Let me, too, O patient moss,
Reckon gain, but never loss!

NATURE.

Great Nature holds no fellowship with grief.
Think not the wind is sighing through the sheaf
For sorrow that the summer's race is run;
Think not the falling rain and shrouded sun,
Or the white scourge of frost laid on the ground,
Are tokens that her pleasures are discrowned
From their brave empires in the earth and sky.
No voice of naiad, when the stream is dry,
Laments her pearly fish and cool-leaved cresses
No dryad waileth when the goodly tresses
Of the green forest-tree are shorn with fire
Ye poets lean to her with strong desire,
And are beloved! Yet though ye all should die,
That live now in the favors of her eye,
For praising her with affluent, golden speech,
The best of you once gone, she would not reach
One sunbeam lower than the daisied mould,
Nor heed at all that ye were dark and cold!
And well 't is known she gives her birds to sing
Jubilant things, when down on broken wing
Ye waver from your happy morning skies,
Moans on your lips and clouds before your eyes.
Yet while ye live and are not hurt at heart,
She is your fellow-reveler, and will part

Her mantle with you, pour out nectar drink,
And lead you, wondering, to the very brink
Of gulfy mysteries, that delight you trembling!
Or when her giant tempests are assembling,
Uptake you in her chariot, and drive
A breathless course where red-armed lightnings strive;
And show the forge where thunderbolts are cast
And Cyclops toiling, when the smoke blows past!
Or she will read those scrolls gray trees have shed,
Divining what shall chance when they are dead;
Or out of rocks, with runic seal inscribed,
Draw strains of music: every wind is bribed
To tell you what their silver trumpets say,
Blown at red evening of an autumn day!

LIFE HATH PUT DEATH AWAY.

Life hath put death away, and mounts apace.
Behold, in every winter-wasted place,
Arise the lovely children of her race.

These keep the earth, and have no thought to spare
Above their charge, — to weave her raiment fair ;
Those nod aloft, and jostle in the air.

And all are glad, and none remembereth
Its sojourn in the darksome house of death,
Its reachings blind towards heaven's light and breath.

Now, could the tender plant, this moment freed,
Think on the narrow chamber of the seed,
Where it was lodged, its joy were great indeed !

Life hath put death away, but straight forgets
Her triumph : thee, O human heart, God lets
In midst of joy recall thy grateful debts.

THE GRASSHOPPER.

Shuttle of the sunburnt grass,
Fifer in the dun cuirass,
Fifing shrilly in the morn,
Shrilly still at eve unworn ;
Now to rear, now in the van,
Gayest of the elfin clan :
Though I watch their rustling flight,
I can never guess aright
Where their lodging-places are ;
'Mid some daisy's golden star,
Or beneath a roofing leaf,
Or in fringes of a sheaf,
Tenanted as soon as bound !
Loud thy reveille doth sound,
When the earth is laid asleep,
And her dreams are passing deep,
On mid-August afternoons ;
And through all the harvest moons,
Nights brimmed up with honeyed peace,
Thy gainsaying doth not cease.
When the frost comes, thou art dead ;
We along the stubble tread,

On blue, frozen morns, and note
No least murmur is afloat:
Wondrous still our fields are then,
Fifer of the elfin men!

A CHARGE TO THE BEES.

Go forth, O bees, at blush of prime, —
Go forth, O bees, and waste no time;
Into the jeweled chalice climb
Of every bloom that opens fresh this hour;
And be ye sure ye find the apple flower.

Oh, slight the violet, if ye will,
And slight the green-gold daffodil,
And hyacinth, made sweeter still
By soft caressings of the midnight shower;
But see ye pass not by the apple flower.

I could forgive ye that ye missed
The lilac's tubes of amethyst,
Lilies, that heaven's breath has kissed,
And all the sweets in wildwood Flora's bower;
But see ye pass not by the apple flower.

O bees, though ye were now released
To search the gardens of the East,
I 'd call ye home, amidst your feast:
I charge you, bring me honey for my dower, —
Bring me the honey of the apple flower.

WILD HONEY.

If I follow the wild bee home,
  And fell with a ringing stroke
  The populous shaft of the oak,
What shall I taste in the comb
And the honey that fills the comb?

From tables flush Nature prepares;
  From hillside, and hollow, and copse,
  And blossoming forest-tops;
From fallows the husbandman spares,
Are borne to me flavorous airs.

I shall taste the months and the days
  Of the season that now is done;
  I shall warm with the wine of the sun,
Stored, in mysterious ways,
In this secret-builded maze!

Then will I, tasting, say, —
  This is arbutus' gift,
  Reached from the leafy drift,
On a glistening April day;
And this is the spirit of May.

This, which o'erbubbles the brim,
  Is naught but the essence of June;
  And this is July's rich boon;
And this, in which visions swim,
Is August, heated and dim.

In these amber wards repose
  The life of the summer hours
  And the coinèd wealth of flowers:
The breath of the mint and wild rose
May sweeten the winter snows!

Ye that embalm the year
  With spices and cerements meet,
  Drop on my lips such sweet
As fell on the mouth severe
Of the Theban poet-seer:

Then, with a mellow tongue,
  In words that have caught the charm
  Of a hidden and murmuring swarm,
I will utter some notes, unsung
Since time and the world were young!

THE REFUGE.

LIKE one who in the doorway stands,
With smiling eyes and open hands,
This hostess, Nature, welcomes me.
With orient hospitality,
She bids me count all things my own,
From airy roof to basement stone;
Then clothes me in her rich attire,
And serves, herself, my mute desire:
"O guest, in this my commonwealth
Live Joy, and Liberty, and Health:
These comrades I bestow on thee;
Be, therefore, hale, and glad, and free."

There cometh no gainsayer here,
I am alone with the ripe year,
And creatures far too wise for grief,
Though summer's term be long or brief;
For here the hours grown old are shed,
And no dark measure sung or said;
But, sighing faint and sweet, they pass,
Each one leaf-mated, to the grass.
Right well I know my dearest friends,
Who speed me towards all fittest ends,

Nor spare reproof, nor praise withhold,
Gifted with voices manifold.
They live and move in all delight,
Joying in beauty and in might,
Nor know that wisdom speaks in them.
They wear the easy diadem
Of most unconscious royalty,
Nor fret at Time's large usury.
I came with sorrow in my heart, —
They plucked it forth, a clean-drawn dart;
I thought to find an oratory, —
They dressed their aisles and walls with glory,
And took a prayer from off my tongue,
That God's high praises might be sung.

VERTUMNUS.

I took a day, and sought for him
Through bosky aisles untracked and dim,
Through cultured field and orchard sweet: —
Did I o'ertake his flying feet?

Once, as I crossed a sylvan glade,
My step the green-brier would have stayed;
The violet looked as it would speak,
And the wild-service, white and meek,
Against my face its coolness laid;
And once the dew on bended blade
Turned towards the sun a sparkling eye,
As flushed and eager I sped by.

As I sped by, as I sped by, —
And fervid noon was in the sky,
And sickles rested on the swath, —
One bearded stalk awoke from sloth,
And lightly swayed it to and fro
Till all its fellows swayed arow;
And where no breathèd sound had been
Went bickering whispers fine and thin.

As I ran on, as I ran on, —
Some boughs grown bright and some grown wan,
And creeping leafy fires wide spread, —
All suddenly the hazel shed
Before my feet its umbered mast,
The oak a shower of acorns cast,
The vine swung low its clusters blue,
The star-flower elvish glances threw.

Morn was when I the chase began;
Close on the evening-bound I ran;
And, counting but a rounded day,
Lo, seasons three had slipped away!
An hundred times the clue I missed,
Too rapt to pause, to look, and list, —
An hundred times, unweeting, trod
Straight past the merry, masking god.

FLOWER AND FRUIT.

In the spring, perverse and sour,
He cared naught for bud or flower,
Garden row or blossomed tree ;
Rounded fruit he fain would see,
Vintage glow on sunburnt hills,
Bursting garners, toiling mills.
Sheer unreason !
Pity 't were to waste the blooming season !

What 's the matter ? Now he sits,
Deep in thought ; his brow he knits.
Here is fruit on vine and bough, —
Malcontent ! What seeks he now ?
Would have flowers, when flowers are none,
So in love with springtime grown !
Sheer unreason !
Pity 't were to waste the ripened season !

DEMETER'S SEARCH.

From Enna, from Enna, once fair with the lily and
daffodil's bloom,
From Enna I drove through the sea-ways, rolling on
tempest and gloom;
Crying, "Who saw her? Who saw the hot wheels
glancing fire in their round?
Who saw the black steeds of the night leaping on with-
out hoof-print or sound?"
Calling, "Cora Persephone, hear me! Send cry unto
cry!
Lost as thou art, I will find thee, in earth, or the
waters, or sky!"

Swift by the ice-springs of Tanais, seeking my daugh-
ter, I came;
Swift on the mountains of Ethiope, swart with perpet-
ual flame:
I trod out the oasis grass, the stream shrank away on
its bed;
The maddening shepherd looked up and cursed the
fierce sun overhead.
I stooped from the pillars of Calpe to search through
the gulfs of the west;

I troubled the peace of the heroes who dwell in the islands of rest.
I kindled a torch, and descended, — I peered in the face of the dead:
Aghast and unnumbered they rose, afar in the darkness they fled,
Blown with the storm of my coming, scattered like autumn-wan leaves;
Shrill was their voice as the thin voice of insects that spring from the sheaves.
Brightening and glooming, I passed them; I brake through the portals of Dis;
Aha! I shed light on those turrets built up from the moaning abyss!

. . . . . .

There the night hath no stars, but dim beacons that flare in the wind;
Black is the spray of the fountain; many a river runs blind,
Pouring with hoarse lamentation through measureless chasms below;
Bitter the sorrowful fruitage the mouldering orchards strew;
Ill is the growth of the garden, — rank nettle, and nightshade, and yew;
Bristles the turf like stubble, thick-beaded with poisonous dew.

The portal is guarded by dragons, bred of the Stygian fen;
Thronged are the lintels and rafters with all evil visions of men;

Rich is the throne-chamber, vaulted and paven with thefts from the mine,
Pictured with mystic Saturnian story, forbidden, divine!
There, sole as a star, I beheld her, queen of the night and the dead,
Clothed in a veil of wan fire, with the asphodel flower on her head.
In her hands were the tributes of spirits new come from the ends of the world,
Garlands of bay-leaf and roses, and tresses the Loves themselves curled.
Me, weeping before her, she knew not, nor sprang with glad tears to my arms,
Dull, unremembering, guarded by crafty Plutonian charms.

Cora Persephone, hearken! Till thou return with the year,
No fountain shall flow out of Enna, no flower in the meadows appear.
I have chidden thy sisters to silence, — their lips shall be voiceless as thine;
They shall not be fed from the harvest, they shall not be gladdened with wine;
But slumber instead, heavy-lidded, on cold beds of rushes reclined:
None but thy voice shall awake them, none but thy hand shall unbind.

I have punished the earth, that engulfed thee, with heat
and with torrents of rain,
With the worm at the core of the apple, and blight in
the ear of the grain;
Lo, I have withholden the morsel from many a famish-
ing mouth,
And stricken the singing-bird on its flight over sea to
the south.
I came to a feast of the sylvans: I smote them with
coldness and fear;
I broke their sweet reeds and their timbrels, and
touched their green garlands with sear.
I have blown out the flame on the altar: I will that all
song shall be mute, —
Mute as thou art, O my daughter, unreached by the
sound of the lute!

PERSEPHONE.

MOTHER, the harvest is garnered; men taste of the season's new wheat;
They lie at thy banquet like gods till melody quickens their feet,
And they rise and dance at the call of the vine-crowned lord of the hills.
Maidens are gathering flowers by all the Sicilian rills,—
The last late flowers that kindle the meadows with color of fire;
The strong gray sea from his caverns and gulfs sings a song of desire,
Wooing the earth in speech that was taught the immortals of old;
The wind with the sun is at rest, and the clouds are a flock in the fold.

I have lived in delight since winter retired to the mountains of pine:
I came when the grass was tender and sweet for the feeding of kine;
The rose was not yet, the swallow and nightingale later than I,
And love was a spirit new-born, whose birthplace was known in the sky.

The singing of zephyr, the motion of rivers, the manifold noise
From cities of men, the laughter of children, — all these were my joys ;
The cloud from the censer, large presents of fruit, and the gladness of wine,
Wild sounds that took wing into heaven when poets breathed legends divine !
Ah, mother, I leave them, ah, ah ! for a kingdom the gods have not seen,
Where the streams are not flowing that bound it, the grass on the banks is not green, —
For the crown with the iron clasp, for the sceptre moulded of lead : —
Better a slave on the earth than a majesty swaying the dead !

Thou rememb'rest my face, in those days when I came from the dwelling of Night,
Pallid and strange as the Moon when she rides in Hyperion's light ;
These lips were as waters bound up with the frost in the dead of the year ;
These eyes were as fountains the summer has spent, for the thirst of a tear :
So should I seem, couldst thou see me, descended past starlight and morn,
While storms whistle out of the east and scatter the mildewing corn !

LITYERSES AND THE REAPERS.

'T is the field of Lityerses: ripe and high the harvest stands;
Sickles gleam, like summer lightnings, all about the sunny lands.
'T is the field of Lityerses: he, a harvest-lord austere,
Gathers whom he will for reapers, bringing them from far and near.
Though it be the chief of legions, or descent of princes great,
Wealthy merchant, speeding herald, — none shall pass his palace gate.
Forth he comes, with churlish greeting, bids the traveler haste afield;
Though his hand be strange and skilless, he a reaping-hook must wield,
From the morn until the shadow thrusting in the swarthy grain,
Where the keen cicada, whirring, stings with sound his dizzy brain.
Hears he not, above the clamor, what the hollow south wind saith?
Strive no longer, yield the contest, — this swift sickle-man is Death!

Reapers, what shall be the anthem, as the swath before
us falls,
While in air the vision beckons of our native towers
and halls?
Reapers, what shall be the banquet, where no harvest-
home is spread?
We shall feed on endless slumber, with this alien
ground our bed!
Through the sickle falls the poppy, — glowing flower
and drooping bud
Fall, and scatter down the furrow, like the spilth of
crimson blood:
So shall life be shorn and scattered ere the star that
crowns the eve;
They shall shudder at the harvest who shall come to
bind and sheave,
One by one our faces scanning by the gleams of west-
ern sky;
Each, in passing, payeth tribute from a moist and pite-
ous eye. . . .
Know ye not who reaps beside us? Feel ye not his
panting breath?
Brother reapers, vain our toiling, — this swift sickle-
man is Death!

Lately, came Sicilian Daphnis, leaving flock and fold
behind;
Shepherd of the sheltered valley, — he to dare the
wave and wind!
Love and wrong his heart have girded with a strength
unknown before.

On the robber's track he follows, hither, to this fateful
shore ;
Comes he to the robber's fastness, where the maiden
lies in thrall.
Vain the gifts he bears for ransom, vain on praying
knees to fall !
Lityerses brings a sickle : "Reap, O guest, with me to-
day :
If thou conquer, take the maiden ; if thou 'rt conquered,
thee I slay !" . . .
Never, thou poor cheated Daphnis, never shalt thou set
her free ;
Never, with thy prize, beat homeward through the high
exultant sea.
Even now the sun is sinking, now the shadow length-
eneth ;
Woe to us and thee, O Shepherd, — this swift sickle-
man is Death !

SOMETHING PASSES.

Something passes in the air,
That if seen would be most fair;
And if we the ear could train
To a keener joy and pain,
Sweeter warblings would be heard
Than from wild Arabian bird:
Something passes.

Blithest in the spring it stirs,
Wakes with earliest harbingers:
Then it peers from heart's-ease faces,
Clothes itself in wind-flower graces;
Or, begirt with waving sedge,
Pipes upon the river's edge;
Or its whispering way doth take
Through the plumed and scented brake;
Or, within the silent wood,
Whirls one leaf in fitful mood.
Something knits the morning dews
In a web of seven hues;
Something with the May-fly races,
Or the pallid blow-ball chases
Till it darkens 'gainst the moon,
Full, upon a night of June:
Something passes.

Something climbs, from bush or croft,
On a gossamer stretched aloft;
Sails, with glistening spars and shrouds,
Till it meets the sailing clouds;
Else it with the swallow flies,
Glimpsed at dusk in southern skies;
Glides before the even-star,
Steals its light, and beckons far.
Something sighs within the sigh
Of the wind, that, whirling by,
Strews the roof and flooded eaves
With the autumn's dead-ripe leaves.
Something — still unknown to me —
Carols in the winter tree,
Or doth breathe a melting strain
Close beneath the frosted pane:
Something passes.

Painters, fix its fleeting lines;
Show us by what light it shines!
Poets, whom its pinions fan,
Seize upon it, if ye can!
All in vain, for, like the air,
It goes through the finest snare:
Something passes.

SONNETS.

DELAY!

O Spirit of the Spring, delay, delay!
Be chary of thy gifts; by slow degrees
Roll back the leafy tide on forest trees;
And in all fields keep thou a jealous sway,
Lest the low grass break into sudden spray,
And clover toss its purples on the breeze.
Bind fast those lily-buds, that prying bees
Shall have no entrance, murmur as they may.
Scatter not yet the orchard's scented snows,
Nor break the cage that holds the butterfly,
Nor let the blow-ball wander up the sky: —
What! flown so lightly? By yon upstart rose,
Summer is here with all her gaudy shows.
O Spirit of the Spring, good-by, good-by!

EPHEMERA.

Midges and moths, — ay, all you restless things,
That dance and tourney in the fields of air:
You, Psyche's postman, trim and debonair,
With eye-like freckles on your bronzèd wings;
You, candle-elves, whose strange emblazonings
With sign of death our ancient gossips scare,
Or who, when sleeps the humming-bird, repair
With stealthy beaks to drain the honey springs, —
Your secret 's out! I know you for the souls
Of all light loves that ever caused heartache,
Still dancing suit as some new beauty toles!
Nor can you e'er your flitting ways forsake,
Till the just winds strip off your painted stoles,
And sere leaves follow in your downward wake.

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE RAIN.

The merchant clouds that cruise the sultry sky,
As soon as they have spent their freight of rain,
Plot how the cooling thrift they may regain:
All night along the river-marsh they lie,
And at their ghostly looms swift shuttles ply,
To weave them nets wherewith the streams to drain;
And often in the sea they cast a seine,
And draw it, dripping, past some headland high.
Many a slender naiad, with a sigh,
Is in their arms uptaken from the plain;
The trembling myrmidons of dew remain
No longer than the flash of morning's eye,
Then back unto their misty fountains fly:
This is the source and journey of the rain.

FROST.

How small a tooth hath mined the season's heart!
How cold a touch hath set the wood on fire,
Until it blazes like a costly pyre
Built for some Ganges emperor, old and swart,
Soul-sped on clouds of incense! Whose the art
That webs the streams, each morn, with silver wire,
Delicate as the tension of a lyre, —
Whose falchion pries the chestnut-burr apart?
It is the Frost, a rude and Gothic sprite,
Who doth unbuild the Summer's palaced wealth,
And puts her dear loves all to sword or flight;
Yet in the hushed, unmindful winter's night
The spoiler builds again with jealous stealth,
And sets a mimic garden, cold and bright.

EQUINOX.

"The night of time far surpasseth the day; and who knows when was the equinox?"

First, winds of March must blow and rains must beat,
Thick airs blend wood, and field, and distant hill,
Before the heavy sky has wept its fill;
And, like a creeping sloth, the chill must eat
Down close to Nature's core; in dull repeat
The days move on with scanted light until,
Far shining from his western window-sill,
Some evening sun full face to face we meet!
And then we say the line is crossed: the feud
Between Old Night and Day adjusted stands,
As in a balance swung by airy hands
Above the clouds. Our fancies are but crude,
And lightly gossip of infinitude:
None knows how wide the arch of Night expands!

PYRRHUS' RING.

I MARVEL much about this wondrous ring:
Plain gold the circlet, set with agate stone,
On which were graved, by Nature's craft alone,
Pierian streams and trees, Apollo king,
And all the Muses as in act to sing.
Not only was each lovely presence known
By form, and robe, and mien, but one would own
The lyre was there, nor wanting any string!
'T was lost, with other precious things of old, —
A long time lost, till some poor husbandman
Upcast it, gleaming, from a fallow mould,
And to a sordid lapidary sold.
I know not all the chance and change it ran;
At last, a poet was its sacristan!

HOMESICK.

This were a miracle, if it could be!
If, never loitering since the prime of day,
Since kissing the cool lips of Northern May,
This drowsy wind at evening brought to me
The fragrant spirit of the apple-tree;
Or if so far sweet sounds could make their way,
That I should hear the robin's twilight lay
Float o'er a thousand leagues of foamy sea!
Now, save I know those eyes exchange no beams
With yonder star (so curves the earth between),
I 'd say, My friend doth from his casement lean,
And charge Canopus, by his pilot-gleams,
To bear love to my port, and lovely dreams
Of homeward slopes new-clothed with summer green.

MASTER SPIRITS.

We know them, though they wander in disguise,
Their crowns put off, their purples laid aside;
The open presence cannot shift nor hide:
Where'er they go, some men will recognize
The gracious hands where all their fealty lies,
And cry discovery! For their brows are wide,
And front all circumstance with tempered pride;
Heaven's full serenity is in their eyes.
Whate'er they do, that labor 's consecrate;
Where they have dwelt are rich memorials hung,
And holy vows recorded, triumphs sung.
They know nor want nor surfeit; their estate
They cannot overdraw nor alienate;
Their youth is never past, and, dying, they die young.

SOLITUDE.

"Every man's imagination hath its friends."

He who must lead his life where life began
(Amid the mountains or still inland plains),
If he desire to visit marts and fanes
In storied cities, pilgrim goals of man,
Will oft behold their visionary plan
Sketched in the summer clouds' slow-moving trains;
Or, longing for the sea, will hear its strains,
When stormy woods break out with praise to Pan.
So, he who lives unfriended and remote,
Hath liberal Fancy serving his desire:
On every wind kind salutations float,
To him addressed; and oft his heart takes fire
At rumor of some masterful emprise,
Wrought on the earth, and anthemed through the skies!

OCCASION.

"O THOU good Genius of my life, attend"
(Thus prayed I), "countenance and grant my prayer,
Give me Occasion! Lo, how I prepare
For deeds of prowess! Let me now defend
Invested citadels, or else descend
The hollows of the sea, and westward fare
Till I a hidden continent lay bare,
And to the stars and time my name commend!"
"Thou child and simple yet!" the Genius saith,
"Of this be well advised: since time began,
Occasion runneth in advance of man
Small pace at first, but ever quickeneth,
Nor stays for gifts, or vows, or prayerful breath;
Some fall behind, some leap into the van."

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

To me thy house is haunted, grieving friend:
A white enchantment in the moonlight falls,
Floats on the walks, makes beautiful the walls;
Up to thy windows fruited branches send
Their evening incense; sighing elves attend
The flowers amid the grass; within thy halls
A voice of airy melody still calls,
And down the stairways the immortals bend.
Oh, well I know what spell enfolds the place:
What lovely truants, on a winter's day,
Caught sight of fairer lands, and slipped away,
Leaving about thy home a mystic grace,
Motions and murmurs without certain trace,
While far from here, and farther yet, they stray.

ROTATION.

O ALL ye myriads in the ages dead,
Princes and peoples, great in power and trust,
And great in love, — all dwindled to fine dust!
Must wolfish Time with such as you be fed,
That living men awhile may keep ahead
Upon the bitter road, where ill and just
Hear, as they run, the hollow panting gust
From fangs of hunger never surfeited?
No! live again, brave world (I would have said),
Nor for our vantage in the breach be cast, —
I could have wept for pity of you, dead,
But I remembered our own fate instead, —
How, to the age that springs before us fast,
We shall become the sacrificial Past.

REVENGE.

Lo! I will hate my enemy, yet breathe
No curse to bring the lightning on his head,
Or break the earth in pitfalls; I will tread
Anear his sleep, and keep my wrong in sheath.
So David bent o'er Saul, couched on the heath
In woody Ziph, and there he might have sped
The dreaming soul to greet the unjust dead,
But left him to that fate he stooped beneath.
O Heaven, there is but one revenge full sweet, —
That thou shouldst slay him in my memory,
Whose bitter words and ways abide with me;
Then, for all surety that we shall not meet
In the overworld, make thou my spirit's feet
Move trackless through the blessed nebulæ!

POVERTY.

O Poverty, if thou and I must wed,
I 'll surely try to sing thee into fame;
I 'll call thee many a high-descended name,
To shed a lustre on thy dowerless head;
Say thou 'rt a royal maiden, Spartan bred,
Early bound out to a harsh foster-dame,
My keen-eyed Hardihood! A worthy shame
I 'll have of all those cates on which I fed
Before I found a zest for thy plain food.
I laugh to think how we shall entertain
Our friends from Sybaris, with all their train,
On nuts and berries from the underwood;
We 'll have our floor with rushes daily strewed,
And patch the roof with boughs against the rain.

THE OREAD.

She dwells upon the fountained heights serene,
I by the broadening river's sullied flow;
She could not breathe the air we breathe below,
Nor we the air that wraps her pure demesne.
Light loves her; there the morning first is seen,
There long delays the wistful afterglow;
Above her gleams the fountain-feeding snow,
Beneath are forests all the twelvemonth green.
She dwells afar; yet still the river sings
What she has sung above its cradle bright;
I look, and lo! the swarthy current brings
An alpine bloom slipped through her fingers white;
But not until the rivers seek their springs
May any gift of mine achieve her height.

ON THE SONNET.

GRANT me twice seven splendid words, O Muse
(Like jewel pauses on a rosary chain,
To tell us where the *aves* start again) ;
Of these, in each verse, one I mean to use —
Like Theseus in the labyrinth — for clues
To help lost Fancy striving in the brain ;
And, Muse, if thou wilt still so kindly deign,
Make my rhymes move by courtly twos and twos !
Oh, pardon, shades of Avon and Vaucluse,
This rush-light burning where your lamps yet shine !
A sonnet should be like the cygnet's cruise
On polished waters ; or like smooth old wine,
Or earliest honey garnered in May dews !
And all be laid before some fair love's shrine !

TO SLEEP.

Light Vanisher, all weary as I am,
Uplift me now, and let us be away!
Find out those regions where our angels stay
When they attend not here; meadows of calm,
With lilies bloomed, and bee-contenting balm, —
The stream-side violet, and the dancing fay!
Or dost thou show me a fair, courtly fray,
Plumed knights, gay steeds, and waving oriflamme?
Sometimes thou leav'st us laughing on the night,
In wondrous vacant mirth; sometimes in tears,
Wide-eyed, and groping for the window light;
And often with strange music in our ears,
Born of the sky on some old, fabled height,
Voices of spirits, or the morning spheres.

ON SEVERN'S LAST SKETCH OF KEATS.

Angel of Sleep or Death! whom hast thou here,
With meek head drooped, all haggard and outworn!
So looked Leander, to the startled morn,
Left by the tide on sands and rushes sere;
And so looked Hyacinth, to Phœbus dear,
As on the sward he lay, by envy shorn;
So looked Rome's martyr youth to burial borne
Within some delved cavern, chill and drear.
O fair death-sleeper! gazing on thee now,
Forgetting all thy years profound of rest
In peaceful barrow by the daisy drest,
We keep a vigil, — by thy pillow bow,
And listen, smiling through our tears, when thou
Murm'rest of flowers that spring above thy breast.

DAWN.

When up from low, mist-gathering lands of sleep
I come, and meet the chastening looks of dawn,
A swift, transcendent change I have undergone,
Like those who in Lethean coolness steep
Their temples, and forget to moan and weep;
For every mortal thorn is then withdrawn,
And they shall put supernal garments on,
And have in Heaven new planet-realms to keep!
So do I drink of dawn, until I rise,
And hail my kindred of the morning air:
The wind, that strips the darkness from the skies,
The dew, that tremblingly the blossoms bear
And fear to spill: — all spirit now am I,
And nothing that can grieve, or change, or die.

TO FAME.

I.

It grieves not us that, by the trumpet's vaunt,
Thou breathest not our name: for who would choose
Henceforth to wear thee with those garish hues
Thou lov'st in court and market-place to flaunt?
So many mouths, all open for descant,
So many jangling tongues as thou dost use,
Who would endure? Yet are there gloating crews
Who in this uproar hear the sirens' chant.
To gain thy voice, they 've tumbled cities down;
Made earth blush red with waste of valiant blood;
Through desert inlands traced a river's flood,
At last within the mystic source to drown;
Or, attic-lodged above the bustling town,
Have dreamed of laurels pushing into bud.

II.

Yet listen, though our prayer be something strange!
Show us no favor for the passing day,
To-morrow, or so long as we shall stay
Within the pleasant light; but when the change
That ends all changes sweeps us in its range,
And we are gone upon the ancient way
Where Night and Silence hold enduring sway,

Let these not hide us wholly, nor estrange!
Then, spirit-like, go speak us dear to those
Who shall hereafter in our places dwell, —
Whom we had loved, and who had loved us well,
Could we have tarried for them! Charge the rose
With speech for us, and to the stream that flows
Through our lost meadows lend a voiceful spell.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09796 081 7